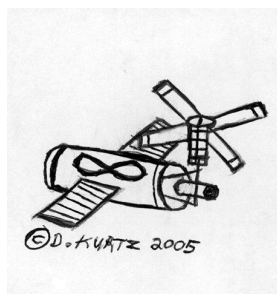


DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS

by Dorothy M. Kurtz

Volume: 6 Issue: 2

Date: Summer 2005



Price per issue: .25 in person, .50 North American postage, \$1.00 overseas, and the usual to a select few.

Yearly subscription rates:

\$2.00 North American postage, \$5.00 overseas, and the usual.

DIMENSIONAL PRESS

230 Kings Highway East, #188

Haddonfield, NJ 08033

Copyright © 2005 by Dorothy M. Kurtz

Greetings all! In July, I hope the space shuttle will have successfully launched into space and returned to Earth--safely.

Eventually, the space shuttles should be back to visiting the *International Space Station* (ISS). In the meantime, I drew an illustration of a space station loosely based on the late *Skylab*.

Some of my readers have asked why I didn't list the opening days and hours of the attractions and other places that I have visited. Well, in some cases, opening times changed often. That's why I've included phone numbers; you could telephone those places yourself.

Speaking of opening days and hours, the Smithsonian Arts and Industries Building in Washington, DC, is closed for the next several years for renovation. Telephone 202-357-2700 for more information.

In answer to some of you who asked about what books I use to aid me in writing, I recommend four books. (1) A dictionary, (2) a thesaurus, (3) an English composition book, and (4) the best supplement to an English composition book, *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, ISBN 0-205-30902-X, published by Allyn & Bacon / Longman Publishers.

Although it's a how to book and not a reference book, *Make \$\$\$ As a Non-Fiction Writer* by Duncan Long is a good common-sense advice book in case you want to make some money writing. (ISBN 1-893626-41-5, published by

Breakout Productions, PO Box 1643, Port Townsend, Washington 98368.)

For this issue, I wrote about attending two conventions (cons): one dealt with outer space, the International Space Development Conference (ISDC) near Washington, DC; and my favorite regional-science fiction (SF) con, Balticon.

If you wish to read a very detailed guidebook about places in the USA as well as some interesting essays about American life, I recommend *Lonely Planet: USA*, ISBN 1741041929, published by Lonely Planet Publications. In addition, if you are curious about reading my two favorite SF magazines, *Analog* (hard-SF stories and science fact) and *Asimov's Science Fiction* (SF and fantasy stories), write or phone for more information to the following address. Dell Magazines Direct, 6 Prowitt St., Suite S, Norwalk, Connecticut 06855-1220 or telephone 1-800-220-7443 (9:00 am-5:00 pm EST).

2005 INTERNATIONAL SPACE DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

On May 18-22, I stayed in Arlington, Virginia, outside of Washington, DC, to attend the 2005 ISDC at the Sheraton National Hotel. The organization running this con, the National Space Society (NSS), has been playing host to the ISDC since 1982. This was my second ISDC; I first attended the ISDC in 1996 when it was in New York City.

Wednesday, May 18, upon arriving, I decided to have a leisurely dinner at a nearby restaurant, (1) Rincome Thai Restaurant in the Days Inn Pentagon, 3030 Columbia Pike, Rte. 244 (703-979-0144). In an atmosphere of a standard motel bar and restaurant with the additions of some Thai pictures and decorations on the walls, I ate delicious moderate-priced Thai food. (Most of the dinner entrees averaged between \$8 to \$15.) This restaurant proved to be very quiet and relaxing; I almost forgot about the rush-hour traffic outside on Columbia Pike. (The restaurant also accepted major credit cards.)

Thursday, May 19, after I registered, I attended (2) the Opening Session. As soon as Burt Rutan came on stage, he received a standing ovation. (Rutan designed *SpaceShipOne*.) Mr. Rutan talked about his thrills of watching the space program in the 1960s as well as his disappointment in NASA afterward. Then, he explained why he entered the X-prize Contest. After this, I visited (3) the Exhibit Room. Here, I saw several paintings of space art, a small-scale model of a space station, a full-sized mockup of the CXV (crew transfer vehicle) spacecraft, and a few tables of dealers selling space-related literature. At the next event, (4) Centennial Challenges, the panel mentioned starting more space-prize competitions similar to the X-Prize in hopes of simulating innovation in ways that standard government procedures couldn't. The next panel, (5) The New NASA, discussed what improvements the space agency should look into in vehicle design, organization, and working with commercial space companies. Next, at (6) Future Benefits of Space Exploration, Dr. Howard Ross, NASA Deputy Chief Scientist, enlightened the audience about the many subjects that NASA has

worked in but few people were aware of. Some of those subjects included art restoration, food safety, saving lives, and so forth.

That afternoon, I listened in on a panel about (7) Commercial Space Transportation. This panel mentioned using reusable launch vehicles in the future for space tourism as well as exploring the moon, Mars, and beyond. Then, at (8) The Future of Exploration, the panel talked about the lack of a national vision for space and stressed the need for NASA to establish cooperation with commercial space companies. On (9) the New Entrepreneurs panel, the panel members expressed what early influences caused them to want to establish their space-related businesses and their current and future plans for their businesses. Finally, for that night, (10) Dr. Robert Zubrin, president of the Mars Society, discussed his plans for a Mars-direct mission that would cost less than what NASA and some others proposed. He also gave his reasons why he wanted a Mars-direct mission as opposed to going back to the moon first.

Friday, May 20, for the first event I attended, (11) Successful Space Entrepreneurship, the panel explained what their space-related businesses were and how they started their businesses. In addition, they also discussed how their businesses succeeded and what plans they have for the future. Next, I listened in on a panel about (12) International Exploration. Representatives from the European Space Agency, China, Canada, JAXA (Japan), and the Russian Federation mentioned their space agency's or their country's plans for exploring space in the next few years. Thus, before going to lunch, I sat in on a panel about (13) Women in Aerospace. Here, a panel of women pilots, engineers, and scientists talked about their aerospace careers. Some of the topics the panel covered were why and how they started their careers and their current positions in their careers. Then, they described how they attempted to organize outreach programs in math, science, and aerospace for girls in schools and clubs.

Later that afternoon, Jim Garvin, NASA Chief Scientist, gave a talk about (14) Science and the Vision. At first, he expressed a desire for the public to feel as much enthusiasm for NASA as they felt in the 1960s. Then, he described some of NASA's visions for the future, especially what they hope to learn about Mars. For (15) the Moon as a Resource panel, the panelists mentioned that both government and private sources should help create infrastructure in culture and trade. In addition, by using as much of the moon's resources as possible, this should lead to successful settlements on the moon. The next panel, (16) Moon, Mars, and Beyond: Architecting the Future, the panelists talked about the challenges of colonizing the moon and Mars. Some of the subjects covered were in engineering, financing, and regaining the public interest in space as in the 1960s. Thus, at (17) New Moon Rising, the two speakers for this panel discussed the differences between the last two NASA chief administrators and their opinions about the current NASA Chief Administrator, Michael D. Griffin. They both

felt that in order to afford to return to the moon and have a human mission to Mars, such as what President Bush wanted, NASA should retire the space shuttles and abandon the ISS.

Saturday, May 21, among the most enthusiastic panels that I attended here was (18) Summit on Space Education. This panel stressed the need for more school children to study and major in math, science, engineering, and technology because the USA already has a shortage of people in these fields. (In a few years, the shortage will be worse due to many of those same people retiring.) At (19) Breakthrough Space Technology, the panel defined nanotechnology and its challenges and benefits. Then, they talked about the challenges and benefits of laser launch vehicles. Next, Dennis Stone gave a talk about the (20) ISS Engineering Outreach. He mentioned the many things that he learned from working with the ISS program and the need to communicate that enthusiasm to others, especially graduate students. For the next talk, (21) Space Education, Dr. Rodney Piercey from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University explained the need to train more teachers in math and science. (Thus, those teachers may convince more students to want to study and major in math, science, engineering, and technology.) Back in the main ballroom, I listened to a panel talk about (22) Focus on Space Tourism. After the panel briefly spoke about the X-Prize and about tourists riding zero gravity in a specially designed aircraft, somebody from Bigelow Aerospace discussed plans for a space habitat. Afterward, someone from Virgin Galactic announced plans to sell sub-orbital space flights in the near future.

During my final night here, I attended (23) The Future of Space Science. Thus, Dr. Steven Squyres of Cornell University showed slides of the latest pictures from Mars and explained what scientists have learned about Mars, so far, and what they hope to learn in the future. Then, Dr. Robert T. Mitchell of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory talked about how the *Cassini* probe operated and what it had so far found out about Saturn and one of its moons, Titan.

Sunday, May 22, before going home, I watched (24) Slide Show: *Hubble*. Inge Hoyer of the Space Telescope Science Institute showed slides about the *Hubble Space Telescope* (HST) and the latest pictures that the HST took of the cosmos.

Finally, on the way home, I summarized the ISDC: Similar to the 1996 ISDC in NYC, it felt like the space-science tracks of every SF con that I've ever been to all rolled up into one con. If anybody has even a slight interest in space, he or she should attend an ISDC in his or her lifetime!

BALTICON 2005

I had only been home for five nights after attending the 2005 ISDC when on Friday, May 27, I rode the Amtrak train from Philadelphia to Baltimore, Maryland. Once in Baltimore, I took a taxi to the Wyndham Inner Harbor Hotel.

After I checked into the hotel, I rode another taxi to (1) the Maryland Historical

Society Museum, 201 West Monument St. in the Mt. Vernon section of Baltimore (401-685-3750). This was the kind of museum I expected to find in Annapolis but didn't. Starting on the top floor, I looked at furniture from different places in MD dating from the late-1600s to the current day. The second floor showed artwork in paintings, drawings, and a few other mediums that MD artists made from the 18th century to the 21st century. Finally, on the ground floor, the museum presented MD history in objects, pictures, texts as well as videos and audio presentations. I also saw plenty of hands-on areas for children covering MD life from the time of the local Native-Americans into the current century. Another section on this floor displayed toys from the 18th and 19th centuries.

That night, after I registered for Balticon 2005 and received my program book, I listened to (2) Conventions 101. Upon seeing me enter the room, one of the panelists said to me, "I've seen you at so many cons; you should be on this panel." (I stayed in the audience.) Similar to panels at past SF cons, this panel told the audience what to expect at Balticon and other SF cons. Then, I went to (3) Fanzines: Not Dead Yet. After one of the panel members showed copies of some fanzines that he collected (some dating back to the 1950s in mimeograph), another panelist promoted his semi-pro-zine, and yet, another promoted his web site. In the end, most of the panel agreed that there would always be paper fanzines, but they won't be as numerous as on-line zines because paper zines cost more to produce. Like the week before at the 2005 ISDC, I again watched a familiar slide show: (4) HST Best in 2005. Unlike last week, however, Inge Heyer, in addition to showing slides of the HST and the pictures it took of the cosmos, also mentioned a future space telescope. (NASA plans to put the *James Web Space Telescope* into the L-2 orbit.) As I took a short break in (5) the Con Suite, this con committee provided the usual snack foods, soft drinks, and chances to chat with other SF fans. Next, I attended (6) the Opening Ceremonies. Here, last year's con chairman (con chair), Dale Arnold, and this year's con chair, Nora Wright, welcomed everybody, introduced the program coordinator, and said that the con needed volunteers. Later, the con emcee talked about the guests at this con and their accomplishments in writing, art, filking, and other areas. These ceremonies ended by the con committee showing a short-tribute video to the late Jack L. Chalker, the first president of the Baltimore Science Fiction Society (BSFS) (1963) and on the committee of the first Balticon (1967). Afterward, I sat in on (7) Is SF Falling Behind the Real World in its Understanding of Technology? Among the subjects the panel discussed were SF stories taking place 100 years from now, but the writer used technology that was only a few years ahead of time; problems with spoken-command machines; and other topics. Finally, before calling it a night, I heard a talk about (8) The Space Elevator and its Implication for Radicalizing Near Space Developments. Using slides as an aid to his talk, the speaker enlightened the audience on how the Space Elevator would work, the estimated costs compared to rockets, its commercial uses, and the different universities involved in its research.

Saturday, May 28, I started out this day by hearing a talk about (9) Laser Propulsion. This speaker compared the *HX Laser Launch* to both standard rockets and the Space Elevator in safety before he gave the audience a brief history of laser launch developments, especially the *HX Laser Launch*. At this point, I'm sure you've noticed that I was attending many panels in the science track, especially the space-science track. Thus, the next panel followed suit: (10) NASA's *Swift Mission: Catching Giant Cosmic Explosions on the Fly*. Although the speaker's Powerpoint presentation wasn't projecting on the big screen, she gave an interesting talk about what gamma-ray bursts were and how they measured in time and energy. Next, I entered (11) the Dealers' Room. Here, I noticed that similar to last year, about half of the dealers sold reading material in SF and fantasy books, magazines, semi-pro-zines, and fanzines. The rest sold other merchandise: jewelry, toys, buttons as well as bumper stickers, t-shirts, costumes, games, pictures, and so on. After this, I visited (12) the Art Show. In this room, I observed that about 70% of the art medium showed paintings and drawings, and the rest presented other mediums: woodwork, tapestry, jewelry as well as sculpture, dolls, and other items. Around 75% of the art themes exhibited fantasy, and the rest displayed SF and space art. Later, I listened to a performance by that same musical group of NASA employees, scientists, technicians, and so forth called (13) The Chromatics. Like their past performances at Shore Leave and Farpoint, this a-cappella group sang about a dozen songs having to do with different subjects in science. Before going to dinner, I sat in one more talk, (14) Destination Pluto: NASA's *New Horizons Mission*. For this event, the speaker discussed the history of the *New Horizons Mission* and what NASA hopes to find when this reconnaissance mission goes to Pluto; its moon, Charon; and the Kuiper Belt.

I went to two events on Saturday night; the first was (15) the Masquerade. Out of 21 costume entries, only two were SF: a girl as a *Dr. Who* assistant and another girl as a "Purple Jedi" from *Star Wars*. The rest of the costumers wore fantasy costumes. Afterward, I went to (16) the Philcon Party where the committee from Philcon offered snack foods and soft drinks. Then, I tried to learn the latest rumors about where and when this year's Philcon will be. (So far, barring an act of God, Philcon should happen on the second weekend in December. They are still looking for a hotel.)

Sunday, May 29, at (17) Writing as a Second Career, the panel talked about their love of writing. On the other hand, most writers didn't make enough in writing to quit their other job, and it has been a challenge to balance both jobs. The next panel, (18) Writer Beware--Avoiding the Scams, the audience received handouts of *The Bulletin*, a

publication from the SF & Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA). They also received a sheet of nine things to look out for when approaching a publisher and literary agent. (Be careful of vanity presses that charge you money and agents who ask for more than \$50, especially if these presses and agents advertise in print or on the Internet. Most publications and agents usually hear from so many would-be writers that they don't have to advertise.) Thus, still in the writing track, I listened to (19) Writing SF and Fantasy for Young Fans (YF). Here, the panel advised the audience not to "dumb down" when writing for YFs and in the story use sex, drugs, and violence **only** if it is important to the plot. In addition, YFs were more blunt about whether a story was good or bad. Back in the science track, at (20) *Kepler Mission to Detect Earth-Like Planets*, Dr. Yoji Kondo used slides to aid in his presentation. Among the subjects he covered were who was Johann Kepler (1571-1630), and he showed a cutaway of the *Kepler* spacecraft as well as how it might detect Earth-like planets. (Dr. Kondo also mentioned being in favor of both human and non-human missions in space.) Then, in the next panel, (21) *Fanfic, Blogs, and Webcomics: The New Fanzines?* (fanfiction, weblogs, and webcomics), the panel explained why more new editors preferred publishing on the Web instead of paper. (Answer: It costs less.) Those panelists also said that many of the subjects were the same as in the former paper zines, only the medium was different.

On Sunday night, I only attended (22) a Space Party run by the Baltimore Chapter of the NSS. Again, I ate the usual snack foods, drank soft drinks, and talked with other SF fans there.

Monday, May 30, the one panel that I attended for that day had a very long title. (23) *Does the Fact That There Are Only Three or So Pro-SF Magazines Tend to Limit the Range, Ideas, and Style of Published Stories?* (Those three SF magazines have been *Analog*, *Asimov's SF and Fantasy*, and *Fantasy and SF*.) This panel mostly agreed that having only three or so SF magazines has been hurting new writers. Additionally, those few magazines had to compete with multi-media as well: TV and the Internet.

That night, I ended my weekend by having my traditional civilized dinner. This year, I ate at (24) the M&S Grill in the Pratt St. Pavilion, Inner Harbor (410-547-9333). Advertising itself as "a classic American grill," the M&S Grill displayed a dark-wood interior, and the menu offered moderate-priced entrees (from \$10 to \$20). I found the service efficient and friendly, and the food tasted good. The restaurant offered several varieties of foods from grilled meats to seafood, soups, salads, and other entrees. (They also accepted major credit cards.)

Finally, to sum up Balticon, as always, I enjoyed its multi-track program, especially the space-science track. Next year, Balticon will be on Memorial Day Weekend again but at a different location: Marriott's Hunt Valley Inn. Long live Balticon!

STOP PRESS: This will be my last year of publishing DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS on a quarterly basis. In addition to this issue, I plan to publish two more issues. I am still working out the details of what future publications I will release after 2006; I'll have more information in the next issue of DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS.

I also have some news about John Inman: Late last year, the top floor of his London house had a fire. But repairs have been completed by now. Shortly after that fire, Mr. Inman became ill with hepatitis and had to miss performing in his Christmas pantomime for 2004/'05. This year, John had a relapse of the hepatitis, but I heard that he has been slowly doing better. June 28 is his 70th birthday; if anybody deserves a happy birthday, he does.

In my next issue, I plan to write about an extended weekend in New York City and about my main vacation this year: St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada. I also plan to attend some SF- and space-related events and places: (1) Shore Leave, (2) the National Air and Space Museum/Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, (3) Big Apple Con, (4) Virginia Air & Space Center, and (5) Philadelphia Sports Card & Memorabilia Show.

Meanwhile, you should hear from me again in the autumn. Goodbye for now!